ATLAS
MYSTIC

MYSTIC...THE MOST EERIE STORIES EVER TOLD!

MYSTIC

OCT.
NO. 24

AUG 14 1957

10¢

"HOW MANY TIMES CAN YOU DIE?"

THE STRANGER FROM SPACE!

GARGOYLE!

ANOTHER MAN'S SHOES!

ON SALE MONTHLY

Skinny Girls Don't Have OOMPH!

It takes those extra lbs. of solid flesh to "bring out" your natural curves

If you're otherwise healthy but skinny, scrawny, rundown and lbs. underweight, try correcting this common mistake in eating.

THERE are three essential substances that many thin, scrawny and undernourished girls may fail to get in sufficient quantity from the food they eat. These substances are Vitamin B_1, calcium phosphate and iron. If, like thousands of others, you are underweight without organic cause . . . never seem to gain a pound . . . are so thin that you look gangling and gawky from insufficient amounts of these precious elements, don't get discouraged.

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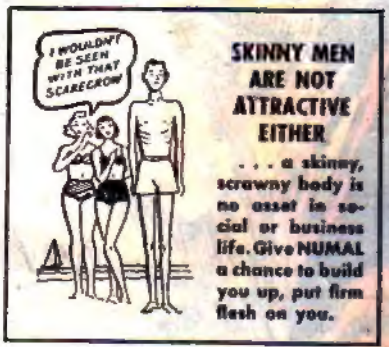
Remember, if you don't get a sufficient quantity of Vitamin B_1 in your daily diet, you may suffer loss of appetite. And without sufficient iron, the element that helps build rich red blood, you may be rundown, pale, weak and listless. You need calcium phosphate for sound teeth and sturdy bones.



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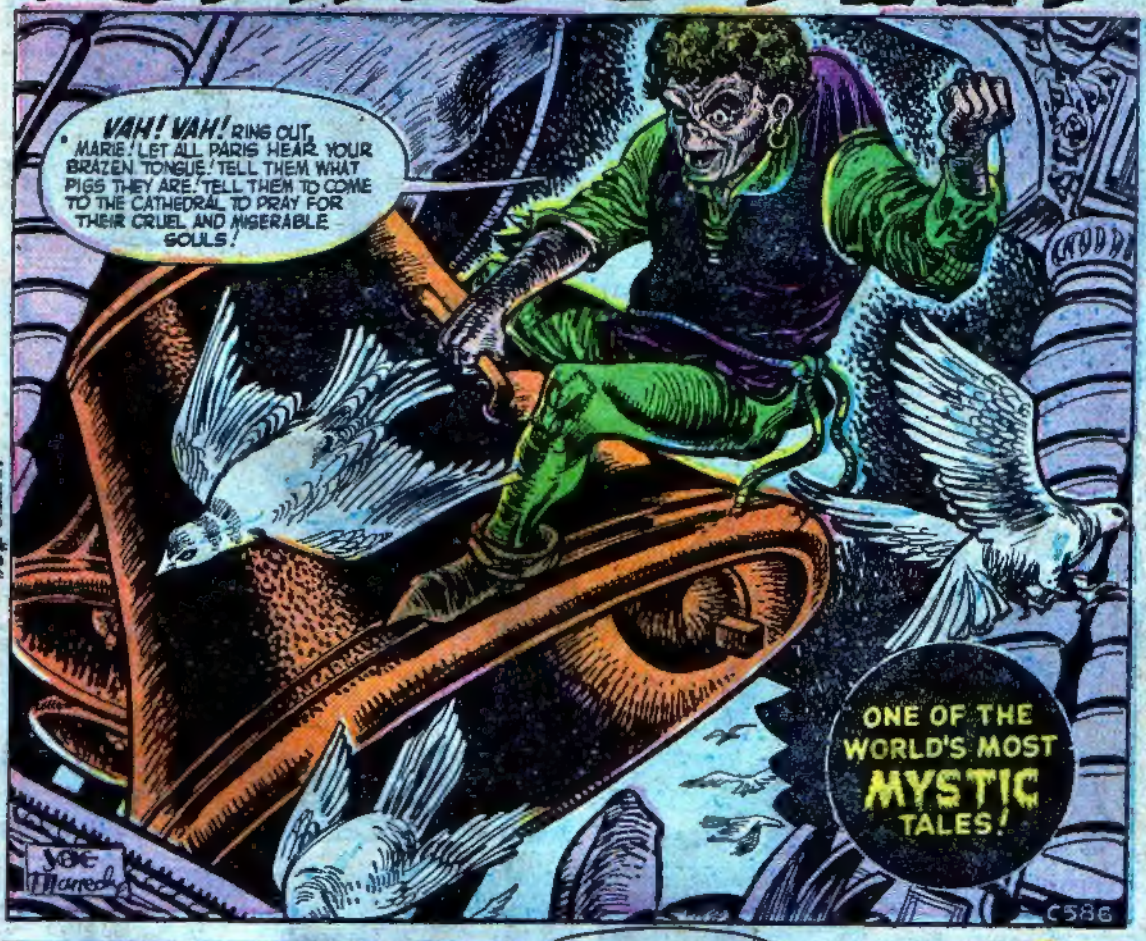
TURN THE LAMP DOWN LOW, URCHINS, AND CAST YOUR OPTICS ON OUR FIRST WEIRDIE! PERHAPS YOU HAVE ALREADY HEARD SOMETHING ABOUT THIS GROTESQUE LITTLE MAN WHO TERRORIZED THE PEOPLE OF PARIS IN THE 15TH CENTURY! BUT HERE IS AN INCIDENT WE'RE SURE YOU ***NEVER*** HEARD ABOUT! SO READ ON!

THE GARGOYLE!


VAH! VAH! RING OUT, MARIE! LET ALL PARIS HEAR YOUR BRAZEN TONGUE! TELL THEM WHAT PIGS THEY ARE! TELL THEM TO COME TO THE CATHEDRAL TO PRAY FOR THEIR CRUEL AND MISERABLE SOULS!
ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST MYSTIC TALES!
JOE Maneely
C586

GOOD HEAVENS! LOOK! THERE'S A MAN RIDING THE GREAT BELL OF NOTRE DAME! HE'LL BE KILLED!
DON'T WASTE YOUR SYMPATHY OR YOUR BREATH, STRANGER! THAT IS NOT A MAN!

THAT'S THE BELL-RINGER, QUASIMODO... MORE BEAST THAN MAN! HE SHOULD SIT ON THE BALUSTRADE WITH THE OTHER HIDEOUS ANIMALS OF STONE...BUT PERHAPS THEN THEY WOULD FLY FROM THEIR PERCHES AT THE SIGHT OF THE UGLY DEVIL!
AH, YES! I HAVE HEARD OF HIM...QUASIMODO... THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME!

ALL PARIS KNEW QUASIMODO AND ALL PARIS FEARED AND SHUNNED HIM! FOR THAT REASON HE WAS EXILED TO THE BELL TOWERS OF NOTRE DAME... AND HIS ONLY FRIENDS WERE THE 15 BELLS HE HAD TO RING... AND HIS FAVORITE WAS THE GREAT BELL KNOWN AS "MARIE"...

VAH! VAH! SPEAK TO ME, MARIE! SPEAK LOUDER! LOUDER! LOUDER!

QUASIMODO! YOU UGLY WRETCH! GET OFF THAT BELL! I TOLD YOU A THOUSAND TIMES NOT TO RIDE THE BELLS!

BUT QUASIMODO COULDN'T HEAR BOLTRO, THE CARETAKER... FOR QUASIMODO WAS AS DEAF AS THE BRONZE BELLS WHICH HAD DEAFENED HIM...

ENOUGH, QUASIMODO! ENOUGH, YOU BLASTED BEAST!

VAH! LOUDER, MARIE, LOUDER!

TWENTY-SEVEN RESOUNDING PEALS LATER FROM MARIE'S BRAZEN THROAT, QUASIMODO ENDED HIS CONVERSATION WITH HIS FRIEND! THEN HE LEAPED OFF THE BELL AND FACED HIS ENEMY....

TEN RINGS IS ALL I WANT ON THE BELL... TEN! UNDERSTAND, YOU IDIOT! AND USE THE ROPE... OR I'LL USE IT ON YOU ...LIKE THIS!

OWWW!

OW-WWW! MARIE, JEAN!

THE BELLS CAN'T HELP YOU, YOU INSULT TO HUMANITY! THEY'RE AS DEAF AS YOU ARE! YOU'LL GET A LASH FOR EVERY EXTRA RING YOU GAVE THE BIG BELL TONIGHT!

THE BELLS HUNG IN SILENCE AND WATCHED AS QUASIMODO WAS WHIPPED!

QUASIMODO... THE ONE-EYED...

QUASIMODO... THE DEAF...

QUASIMODO... THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME!

THE FOLLOWING DAY, THE BELL-CASTER CAME TO INSPECT THE GREAT BELL AND TO TEST ITS DELICATE TONE...

IT'S ALL YOUR FAULT THAT I HAVE TO CLIMB TO THIS TOWER, YOU UGLY FREAK! YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO RING THE BELLS... NOT RIDE THEM!

YOUR WEIGHT ADDS MORE TO THE CLAPPER! ...YOU'LL RUIN THE TONE! STAY OFF! AND IF YOU DIDN'T HEAR THAT...THEN THIS'LL TELL YOU WHAT I MEAN!

OW WH!

THE BELL-CASTER WORKED ALL MORNING...AND WHEN NOON CAME, HIS BEAUTIFUL STEPDAUGHTER, PETITE, BROUGHT HIM HIS LUNCH...

IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU GOT HERE WITH MY BREAD AND WINE! WAIT UNTIL I FINISH, THEN YOU CAN TAKE BACK THE BASKET...AND KEEP AWAY FROM THAT HUMAN GARGOYLE, QUASIMODO!

YES, PAPA!

PETITE OBEYED HER STEPFATHER AND SAT FAR AWAY FROM QUASIMODO...

BUT AS SHE SAT SHE STOLE A FEW GLANCES... AND IN QUASIMODO'S UGLINESS, SHE SAW A GREAT BEAUTY...

QUIETLY, PETITE MADE HER WAY TO QUASIMODO AND SPOKE TO HIM...

I AM PETITE, QUASIMODO...AND I HAVE HEARD MUCH ABOUT YOU...BUT I NEVER BELIEVED IT! AND NOW THAT I HAVE SEEN YOU, I KNOW IT CAN'T BE TRUE!

QUASIMODO WATCHED PETITE'S LIPS AS THEY FORMED THE WORDS...

PETITE! I WARNED YOU NOT TO GO NEAR THAT MONSTER! YOU DISOBEYED ME!

B-BUT... FATHER... HE-HE'S NOT ...OWN!

FIRE BLAZED IN QUASIMODO'S EYES, FOR THE ONLY PERSON WHO HAD EVER SPOKEN TO HIM KINDLY WAS BEING PUNISHED FOR IT! THE HUNCHBACK SPRANG AT THE BELL-CASTER LIKE A GARGOYLE!

THE HUNCHBACK'S STRONG FINGERS TIGHTENED AROUND THE BELL-CASTER'S THROAT LIKE A VISE...AND QUASIMODO SQUEEZED...

OWW-W-W! HELP! HELP!

BUT SUDDENLY, QUASIMODO FELT THE FAMILIAR STING OF A ROPE WHIP ACROSS HIS BACK... AND THE HUMAN VISE LOOSENED...

LET GO OF HIM, YOU MADMAN! LET GO!

OW-WW!

I'LL WHIP YOUR MISERABLE HIDE UNTIL YOU...

NO! NO! DON'T BEAT HIM! HE MEANT NO HARM! HE WAS TRYING TO PROTECT ME!

IN THE NAME OF THE SAINTS! HE HAS BEWITCHED MY DAUGHTER! HE HAS MADE HER TURN AGAINST HER OWN STEPFATHER! COME, PETITE, I WILL TAKE YOU HOME! BOLTRO WILL TAKE CARE OF THE HUNCHBACKED DEVIL!

I WILL GIVE HIM MORE SCARS TO REMIND HIM TO KEEP HIS FILTHY HANDS OFF OF HUMANS!

THE ROPE SLASHED ACROSS QUASIMODO'S BACK, IT CUT ACROSS HIS FACE, IT SNAPPED AND BIT INTO HIS FLESH LIKE AN ANGERED SERPENT...AND ALL PARIS HEARD THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME SCREAM FROM THE BELL TOWER...

LISTEN TO THAT CROOKED DEVIL YODEL! BOLTRO IS LAYING THE ROPE TO THE WRETCH!

HE SHOULD GET TEN LASHES A DAY JUST FOR BEING AS UGLY AS HE IS!

WHEN BOLTRO'S ROPE WAS RED WITH THE HUNCHBACK'S BLOOD, HE STOPPED THE BEATING AND LEFT QUASIMODO LYING IN THE BELL TOWER...MORE DEAD THAN ALIVE...

BUT THEN QUASIMODO FELT THE COOL TOUCH OF A DAMP CLOTH UPON HIS BROW...THEN THE WARM AFFECTION OF WINE SEEPED THRU HIS LIPS...AND WHEN HE OPENED HIS EYES...

PETITE!

OH, QUASIMODO, I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD! WHY DO THEY TREAT YOU LIKE THIS! THE BRUTES! THE BEASTS! I...I... BROUGHT YOU WINE AND BREAD...AND FOUND YOU LIKE THIS!

AS QUASIMODO READ PETITE'S LIPS, THE PAIN FROM HIS MANY WOUNDS WAS FORGOTTEN AND REPLACED BY A GREATER PAIN IN HIS HEART... QUASIMODO WAS IN LOVE!

POOR QUASIMODO, LET ME DRY YOUR TEARS! I KNOW THAT THE PAIN YOU FEEL MUST BE UNBEARABLE!

QUASIMODO'S WOUNDS HEALED...BUT NOT THE WOUND IN HIS HEART! AND AS THEY HEALED THE TOWERS OF NOTRE DAME WERE BEING EMBELLISHED WITH STONE CREATURES UGLIER THAN THE HUNCHBACK...

GARGOYLES! GRIFFINS...ALL CHILDREN OF THE DEVIL! DO YOU CALL THAT BEAUTY? YOU ARCHITECTS SHOULD BE BEHEADED FOR THE LEPROSY OF STONE YOU HAVE INFLICTED UPON NOTRE DAME!
YOU ARE A PEASANT, BOLTRO! TO YOU BEAUTY IS A CHUBBY CHERUBIM PERCHED UPON A FLEECY CLOUD AND GRINNING FROM EAR TO EAR!

BUT THE TRUE BEAUTY OF LIFE IS FASHIONED IN UGLINESS...IN GARGOYLES, GRIFFINS...AND IN TWISTED, MISSHAPEN CREATURES SUCH AS QUASIMODO, THE BELL-RINGER!
IF YOU SEE BEAUTY IN THAT GNARLED LUMP OF FLESH, THEN YOU MUST HAVE THE SOUL AND THE SIGHT OF THE DEVIL HIMSELF!

TWO DAYS AFTER THE WORK ON NOTRE DAME WAS COMPLETED...PARIS WAS PLAGUED WITH AN OUTBREAK OF HORRIBLE MURDERS!

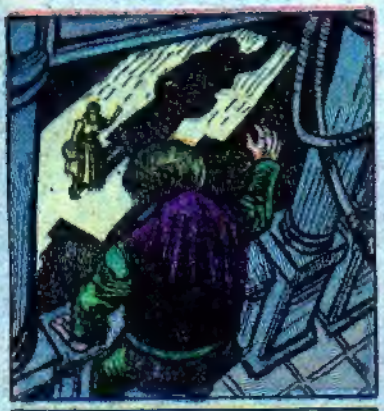
AND ALL THE MURDERS WERE COMMITTED IN THE SHADOWS CAST BY NOTRE DAME...

THE PEOPLE OF PARIS DRAGGED QUASIMODO OUT OF THE CATHEDRAL AND INTO THE SQUARE!

ALL RIGHT! PULL UP ON THE ROPE!
STOP! STOP! IT IS YOU WHO ARE THE MURDERERS! YOU'RE HANGING AN INNOCENT MAN! WHAT PROOF HAVE YOU THAT QUASIMODO IS THE KILLER? ARE YOU HANGING HIM BECAUSE YOU THINK HE IS THE KILLER OR BECAUSE HE'S QUASIMODO...THE HUNCHBACK!

THE CROWD HUNG THEIR HEAD IN SHAME AND DRIFTED AWAY, AND WHEN THEY WERE ALL GONE, QUASIMODO TOOK PETITE'S HAND INTO HIS GNARLED PAW AND KISSED IT IN GRATITUDE... SECRETLY WISHING THAT IT WERE HER LIPS HE HAD KISSED...

EVERY NIGHT QUASIMODO WATCHED FOR PETITE FROM THE TOWERS OF NOTRE DAME! SHE OFTEN BROUGHT HIM WINE AND BREAD...AND WHEN HE SAW HER COMING HE WAS AS HAPPY AS WHEN HE WAS RINGING MARIE...



QUASIMODO'S JOY WAS SUDDENLY SMOTHERED BY THE SIGHT HIS ONE EYE SAW! A MYSTERIOUS SHADOW SWOOPED UPON PETITE AND.....

THE HUNCHBACK LEAPED ON THE ROPE HANGING FROM THE GREAT BELL AND SLID DOWN LIKE A FALLING STONE...

WHEN HE REACHED THE SQUARE, THE KILLER HAD VANISHED...AND ON THE COBBLED SQUARE LAY PETITE...

THERE'S THE KILLER! IT'S QUASIMODO ..NOW WE HAVE THE PROOF! HE'S GOT...GOOD HEAVENS! IT'S MY STEPDAUGHTER! HE'S KILLED PETITE!

HANG HIM!

AND QUASIMODO WAS HANGED! THERE WAS NO ONE TO SAVE HIM...FOR PETITE, HIS ONLY FRIEND, WAS DEAD...

HE MUST HAVE BEEN INSANE! YOU HEARD HIS LAST WORDS!
THE DEVIL ACCUSED THE STONE GARGOYLES ON NOTRE DAME'S TOWERS OF MURDERING MY STEPDAUGHTER!

PETITE WAS BURIED THE FOLLOWING NIGHT...AND AS HER STEPFATHER AND BOLTRO WALKED HOME FROM THE CEMETERY...

THEY'RE THE KILLERS! THE GARGOYLES ARE THE KILLERS! THE HUNCHBACK WAS RIGHT!

ONLY QUASIMODO COULD KEEP THEM IN CHECK...AND NOW ...HE'S GONE!

AND TODAY, IN A TINY CEMETERY IN THE HEART OF PARIS, THERE ARE TWO OLD AND CRUMBLING TOMBSTONES...SIDE BY SIDE! DEATH HAD WROUGHT WHAT LIFE COULD NOT!

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LOOK UP THERE! DO YOU SEE IT? IT STARTED AS A SMALL SPECK IN THE SKY, BUT NOW IT'S GETTING CLOSER! AND YOU CAN SEE WHAT IT IS NOW... AN INTER-PLANETARY VISITOR FROM OUTER SPACE! BUT... IS IT FRIEND OR FOE?

THE STRANGER FROM SPACE

DOCTOR MERLE! THAT THING ISN'T A COMET! IT'S A SPACE SHIP FROM ANOTHER WORLD!
YES, LUDWIG!... AND IT'S GOING TO COME DOWN NEAR OUR LABORATORY!
ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST MYSTIC TALES!
KANE

THE CRAFT BOUNCED ONCE, TWICE, THEN RUMBLED TO A HALT IN FRONT OF DOCTOR MERLE'S RESEARCH LABORATORY...

WE'VE GOT TO SAVE WHOEVER IS INSIDE THAT SHIP! COME ON, LUDWIG! WE'LL BE THE FIRST TO SEE A CREATURE FROM ANOTHER PLANET!
NO! WE SHOULD CALL THE POLICE! IT MAY KILL US!

A CREATURE STOOD IN THE DOORWAY FOR AN INSTANT... THEN IT TOOK A WEAK STEP TOWARD THE TWO MEN... AND COLLAPSED!
IT'S HURT! QUICK, LUDWIG! HELP ME CARRY IT TO THE LABORATORY!
ALRIGHT! BUT I TELL YOU, DOCTOR, WE SHOULD KILL IT FIRST!
WE CAN'T LET IT DIE, LUDWIG! IT WILL UNLOCK UNTOLD MYSTERIES OF THE UNIVERSE FOR MANKIND!
VERY WELL! IF ANYONE CAN SAVE ITS LIFE, THAT MAN IS YOU, DOCTOR MERLE!
SO FOR 72 HOURS, THE FAMOUS DR. MERLE WORKED MEDICAL MARVELS ON THE STRANGE CREATURE FROM SPACE... AND THEN...
THIS HEART SOUNDS FINE, DOCTOR!
SO DOES THIS ONE! NOW THAT BOTH ITS HEARTS ARE STRONG, MAYBE I CAN REVIVE IT WITH A STIMULANT!
REVIVE IT! I'LL HAVE NO PART OF IT, DOCTOR! I'M LEAVING THIS PLACE IN THE MORNING... AND I'M GOING TO REPORT THIS TO THE AUTHORITIES!
GET OUT THEN, YOU FOOL! I HAVE WORK TO DO HERE TONIGHT... WONDERFUL WORK!
DR. MERLE EMPTIED THE HYPODERMIC INTO THE CREATURE'S ARM...
SECONDS LATER AN ARM TWITCHED...
AN EYE OPENED...
AND THE CREATURE SAT UP...
2

WHERE AM I?
YOU'RE ON EARTH! BUT THIS IS INCREDIBLE! YOU SPEAK OUR LANGUAGE! HOW?
A SIMPLE FEAT... BUT THIS PLANET EARTH! IT'S WONDERFUL!
IT'S JUST LIKE MARS BEFORE THE PLUTONIANS CAME!
GREAT SCOTT! DO YOU MEAN CREATURES FROM PLUTO INVADED MARS?
YES! THE FLESH-EATERS FROM PLUTO CAME AND DEVOURED THE MARTIANS BY THE THOUSANDS! THE FEW MARTIANS LEFT ARE HIDING IN TERROR IN THE CANALS!
YOU WERE LUCKY TO ESCAPE! BUT COME, YOU MUST SLEEP! YOU CAN TELL ME MORE IN THE MORNING WHEN YOU'RE STRONGER!
BUT LATER THAT NIGHT, AS THE STRANGER FROM SPACE SLEPT SOUNDLY IN DR. MERLE'S LABORATORY...
I CAN'T LET THIS MONSTER LIVE... TO GROW STRONGER AND MORE DEADLY! I MUST KILL IT BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!
WHATEVER YOU ARE? WHEREEVER YOU CAME FROM... DIE!
THEN SUDDENLY AS A GRIM FIGURE LEAPED FROM BEHIND A DISSECTING TABLE...
YOU FOOL, LUDWIG! YOU MISERABLE FOOL!
WAKE UP! HURRY! YOU'RE IN TERRIBLE DANGER! WHEN THIS FOOL WAKES UP, HE'LL HAVE EVERY FANATIC IN THE COUNTRY AFTER YOU! WE MUST GET OFF THIS PLANET!
WHAT?!? HE WANTS TO KILL ME? COME! WE WILL BLAST OFF IMMEDIATELY!
3

DO YOU THINK WE'LL BE ABLE TO BLAST OFF?
THE SHIP IS VERY RUGGED! GET IN! I'LL USE THE RESERVE ROCKETS!
...AND MINUTES LATER WITH EVERY AVAILABLE ROCKET THUNDERING AT FULL BLAST...
VARROOOOMM!
WE MADE IT, DOCTOR!
YES! BUT WHERE CAN WE GO NOW? WE'RE OUTCASTS!
NO, DOCTOR! WE'LL GO BACK TO MY PLANET!
BUT THE PLUTONIANS WILL EAT US ALIVE IF WE LAND ON MARS!
WHO SAID ANYTHING ABOUT MARS, DOCTOR?
I'M A PLUTONIAN!
THE END
ATLAS FOR THE BEST IN SUSPENSE STORIES LOOK FOR THE ATLAS SEAL ON THE COVER! ATLAS

THE MYSTERIOUS PAINTING!

IT was all Jennie's fault. If she hadn't been such a shrew, always bickering with me . . . telling me to get a steady job instead of trying to write stories that would sell. She couldn't understand why I had left New York and gone with her to Paris to rent a studio room in a Montmartre garret. Actually, in Paris, I found life too fascinating to sit down before my typewriter and get to work. There was too much to see out in the streets.

And then came that fateful day when I stopped before the little art shop in Clichy and gazed in fascination at the painting in the window. Some unknown artist had painted the very house in which I was now living! It was a strange picture . . . an aura of mystery seemed to hover over the house. I could not tear my eyes away from it and was determined to own it. I entered the shop. An old man came toward me.

"The painting in the window, of the old house on the Rue Thoroze . . . I would like to buy it!" I told the old man.

"Ah, yes," he said. "The last work of Pierre Mirabeau. He lived in this house of the painting, monsieur. In the garret studio!"

The garret studio room! That's where *I* was living!"

"And what happened to him?" I asked.

The old man shook his head. "No one knows, monsieur. One day the neighbors heard his wife screaming in the room. When they broke in, the poor girl was lying dead on the floor, strangled! There was no sign of Mirabeau . . . and he hasn't been found since! That was exactly one year ago. I purchased this painting from the authorities . . . it was still on Mirabeau's easel in the room. His final painting!"

He winked at me. "Now that you know the strange story of the artist, perhaps you no longer desire to purchase his painting, eh?"

But the old man's tale had produced the effect that he probably had intended anyway. I wanted to own that painting more than ever! So I dug into my pocket and came up with 5,000 francs. The old man took my money, wrapped my painting for me, and I left the little shop. All the way to my garret room, I tried to think up answers to Jennie's probable criticism.

And of course Jennie ran true to form. When I entered the studio and unwrapped the picture, she looked at it and then started in on me! "Spendthrift!" That was one of her favorite terms. "Lazy!" That was another. "Why don't you get a job?" That sentence she used most of all! But I just let her go on ranting and raving. I propped the painting up on a table by the wall and leaned it against the wall.

The painting seemed to represent the continual conflict that raged between me and Jennie, and she never stopped using it as an example of my foolishness, my idleness, my failure to write. In the days that followed, Jennie's voice took on a tone more acid than usual. I would sit before that painting by the mad Mirabeau and gaze at it for hours, while Jennie's voice railed at me from all corners of the room. And slowly, a feeling of hatred began to grow inside me. The small amount of affection I once held for Jennie was extinguished. Now she was a harpy, a shrewish woman who never stopped her tongue-wagging. I tried to close my ears to her taunting criticism. But it was no use.

As many dark thoughts began to work themselves into my brooding mind, I made a strange discovery. As the days went by and I kept studying that painting, I began to notice a change come over the picture. When I had first bought it, I was certain there were no people to be seen in it, neither in the street nor at the windows of the old house. But one day a distinct shape began to take form in the painting. It was a tall, gaunt, masculine figure standing in the street and gazing toward the old house. The figure wore a red cloak and had its back to the viewer, so that I could not see his face. At first I thought that perhaps the figure had always been there, and that because of the subtlety of Mirabeau's colors, I had not noticed it. That figure fascinated me and I couldn't take my eyes off it.

That night I slept fitfully. In the morning, the first thing I did when I got out of bed was to take a quick look at the painting. And that's when I received my first shock! The red-cloaked figure was still in the painting all right, but now it had moved its position from the street to the front door of the house! The mysterious stranger seemed to have an urgent appointment in this house!

CONTINUED AFTER NEXT PAGE

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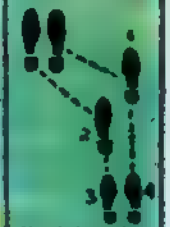

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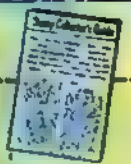

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—CONTINUED

I sat on my chair before the painting. My eyes never left it! Nor did the figure standing before the front door of the house move. Jennie was sure I was going mad and she kept wagging her shrewish tongue. She kept it up all afternoon; if it had not started to rain outdoors I would have fled from the house. But I was also unwilling to leave my painting, so I had to listen to that nagging tongue wagging for hours and hours! And finally I could stand it no longer!

I got up from my chair and grabbed Jennie. I shook her, but she wouldn't stop railing at me. Her mouth was twisted in a snarl as she kept talking. I placed my hands around her throat. Jennie stopped talking then. Her mouth opened in childlike wonder. Her eyes widened in sudden fear. I wanted to take my hands away from her throat then, but I was afraid she would start up all over again. I was afraid that if I lessened the pressure, her tongue would start its shrewish wagging again. So instead of relieving the pressure on her throat, I tightened my fingers!

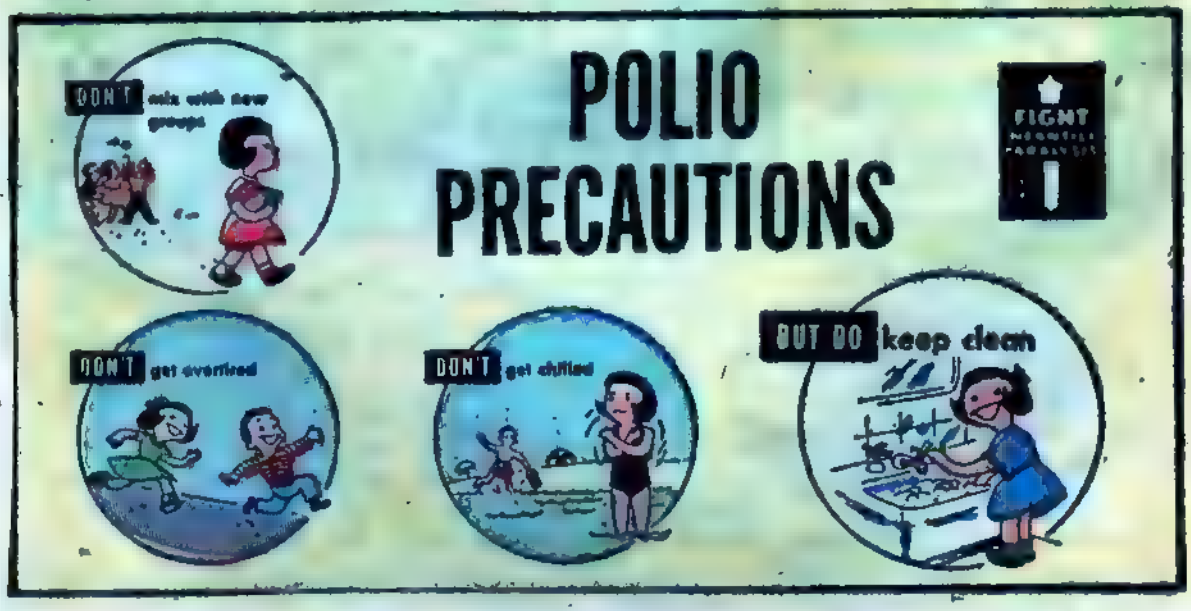
Jennie's complexion turned blue. Her eyes seemed ready to pop out of her head. And all the time I kept squeezing harder. If I let go, Jennie might start talking again. She fell limp. Then I let her body fall to the floor. She lay there like a crumpled rag doll. And then I realized for the first time what I had done . . . a feeling of sickening horror overwhelmed me! What had compelled me to change so suddenly from a quiet, easy-going writer to an insane killer? And then I remembered the story of the mad painter Pierre Mirabeau. He too had killed his wife by strangling in this very room, and only twelve months before! Could the painting have had anything to do with my foul action?

I turned my gaze back toward the painting, propped there on the table against the wall. I was horrified by what I saw! The red-cloaked figure was gone! There was not a person to be seen in the painting! And then, suddenly, there was a knock upon my door! My entire body shook with fright. I turned toward the door, unable to speak. The door was opening slowly. I knew whom I would see in the doorway! Yes, it was the red-cloaked figure from the painting! There he was standing before me in the doorway, his face still partially concealed in the shadows of the hallway.

"I've come for you!" he said in a deep, somber voice. "I was here a year ago too! Pierre Mirabeau had to pay for his sinful crime. Now *you* must come with me too!"

And I knew who he was, even before he stepped into the room and the light shone on his twisted, smiling face. He carried about him the suffocating odor of sulphur . . . his horns reflected the light of the overhead bulb! He moved toward me . . . he was at my side. And suddenly the room disappeared and I felt myself falling . . . winged hob-goblins and demons flew about me! They were to be my escort to the Lower Regions! And the last thing I remember before I lost consciousness was a piercing scream of agony, issuing from my own throat!

THE END D-258



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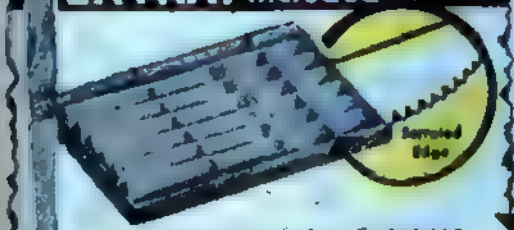

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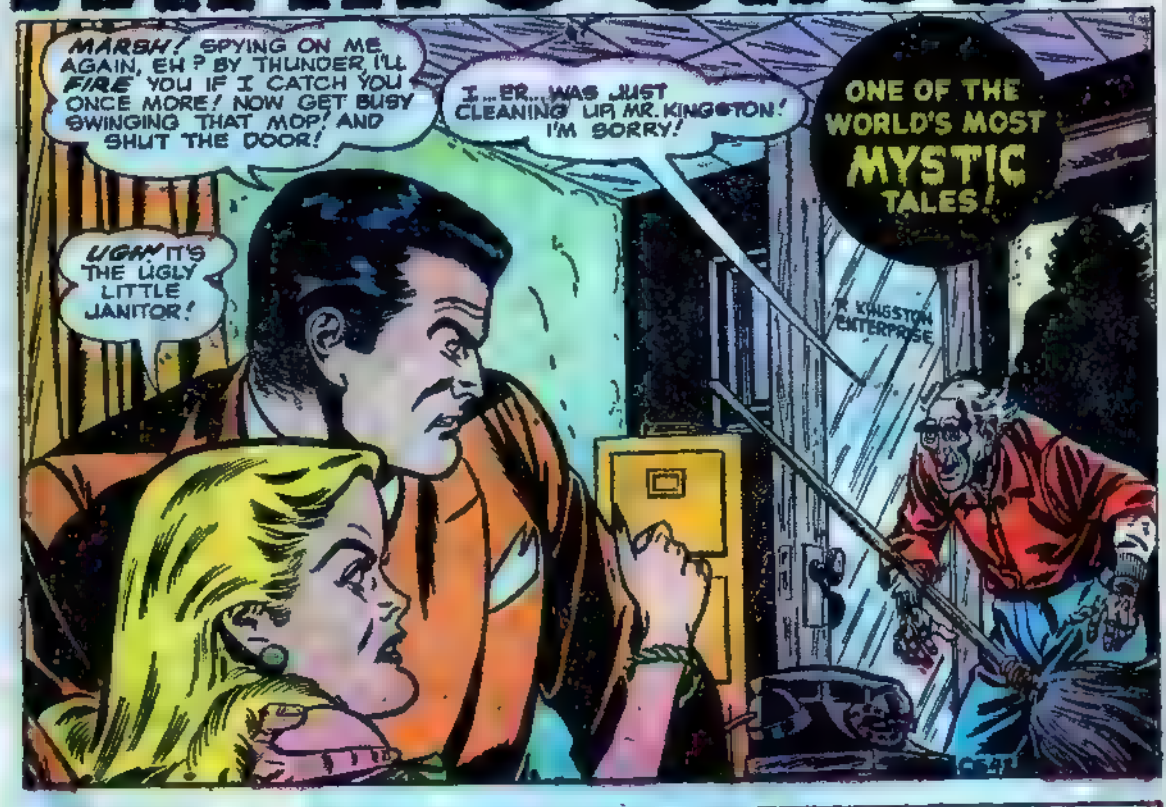
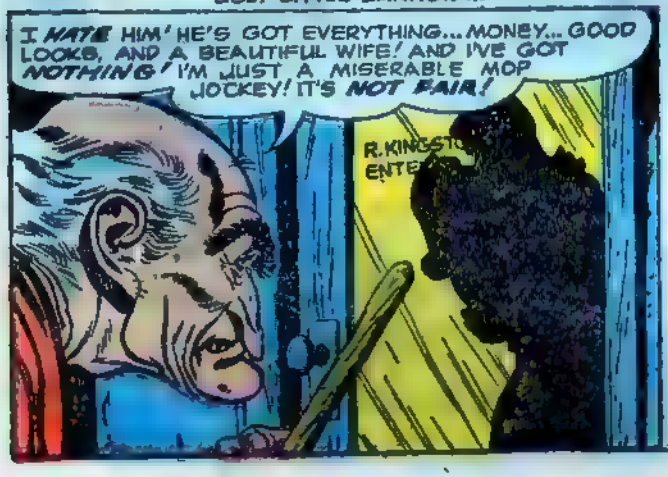
SO THE POOR DOCTOR IS THE *FIRST* EARTHMAN TO REACH OUTER SPACE... BUT, "FIRST COME... FIRST SERVED"! NOW HERE'S A CHARACTER WHO WANTS TO BE THE *FIRST* TO TRY SOMETHING NEW! BUT HE DOESN'T REALIZE WHAT HE'S LETTING HIMSELF IN FOR! THIS SHOULD ONLY *NOT* HAPPEN TO *YOU*!

ANOTHER MAN'S SHOES


MARSH! SPYING ON ME AGAIN, EH? BY THUNDER, I'LL FIRE YOU IF I CATCH YOU ONCE MORE! NOW GET BUSY SWINGING THAT MOP! AND SHUT THE DOOR!
I...ER...WAS JUST CLEANING UP! MR. KINGSTON! I'M SORRY!
ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST MYSTIC TALES!
UGH! IT'S THE UGLY LITTLE JANITOR!
R. KINGSTON ENTERPRISE


THAT'S WHAT EVERYBODY CALLED ABNER MARSH..."THE UGLY LITTLE JANITOR"...
I *HATE* HIM! HE'S GOT EVERYTHING...MONEY...GOOD LOOKS, AND A BEAUTIFUL WIFE! AND I'VE GOT *NOTHING*! I'M JUST A MISERABLE MOP JOCKEY! IT'S *NOT FAIR*!

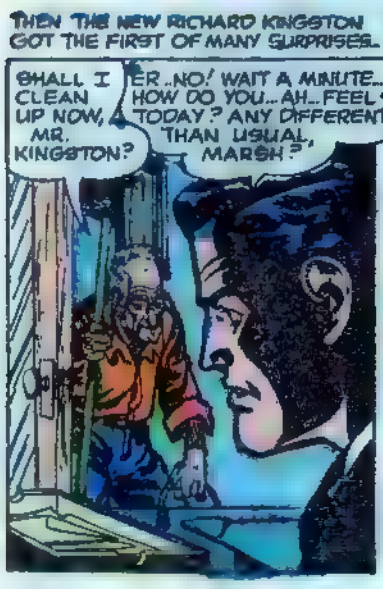
IF ONLY I COULD TRADE PLACES WITH KINGSTON...TO HAVE HIS MONEY, GOOD LOOKS AND...*STELLA*! I'D GIVE *ANYTHING*, ANYTHING IN THIS *WORLD*!

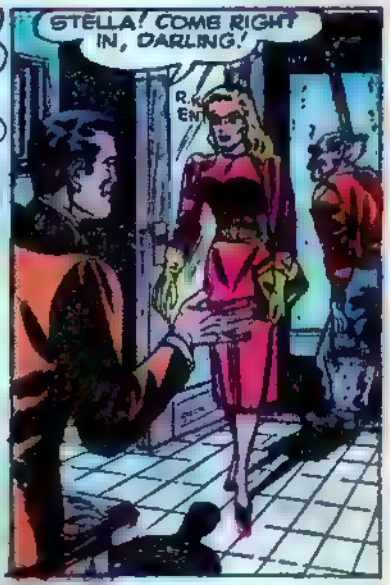
THAT NIGHT, AS ABNER MARSH WALKED HOME FROM WORK...
'THAT'S ODD! I NEVER NOTICED THIS STORE BEFORE... AND THAT SIGN! IT'S A FAKE OF COURSE! STILL, WHAT HAVE I GOT TO LOSE?
MADAME TOLLORA CAN MAKE YOUR WISH COME TRUE
SO MARSH WENT INTO THE STORE, AND AS HE STEPPED PAST A HEAVY CURTAIN AND INTO A DARK ROOM, HE FELT A SUDDEN CHILL RUN THRU HIM, AS THOUGH HE HAD STARTED SOMETHING FROM WHICH THERE COULD BE NO TURNING BACK...
WHAT IS YOUR WISH?
I..I WANT TO CHANGE PLACES WITH SOMEONE... A MISTER RICHARD KINGSTON!
CHANGING BODIES IS COSTLY AND DANGEROUS! YOU CAN NEVER RETURN TO YOUR OLD BODY!
GOOD! I'M THE LAST PERSON IN THE WORLD I WANT TO BE! HERE TAKE THIS MONEY AND LET'S GET STARTED!
SIT DOWN! THE SPELL IS TOO STRONG TO TAKE WHILE STANDING!
IF YOU'RE LYING, YOU OLD HAG, I'LL KILL YOU!
MARSH DRANK THE EVIL-SMELLING MIXTURE IN ONE GULP...
THE MIXTURE TORE AT HIS VITAL ORGANS...
AND THE FLESH ON HIS FACE TIGHTENED AND BURNED...
AND ABNER MARSH FAINTED...

FOR AN ETERNITY OF AGONY, ABNER MARSH'S MIND WHIRLED CLOSE TO THE PRECIPICE OF INSANITY...

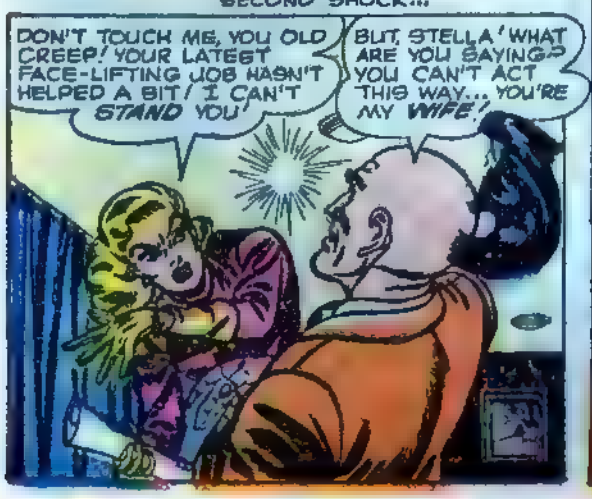
AND SUDDENLY IT ALL STOPPED...

THEN THE NEW RICHARD KINGSTON GOT THE FIRST OF MANY SURPRISES...



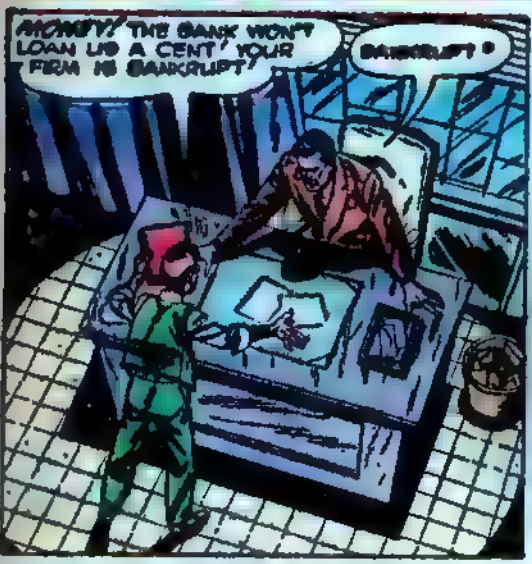


THIS WAS GOING TO BE ONE OF THE TREMENDOUS MOMENTS OF HAPPINESS THE NEW MR RICHARD KINGSTON HAD DREAMED OF..THEN HE GOT HIS SECOND SHOCK...


DON'T TOUCH ME, YOU OLD CREEP! YOUR LATEST FACE-LIFTING JOB HASN'T HELPED A BIT! I CAN'T STAND YOU!
BUT, STELLA! WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? YOU CAN'T ACT THIS WAY... YOU'RE MY WIFE!

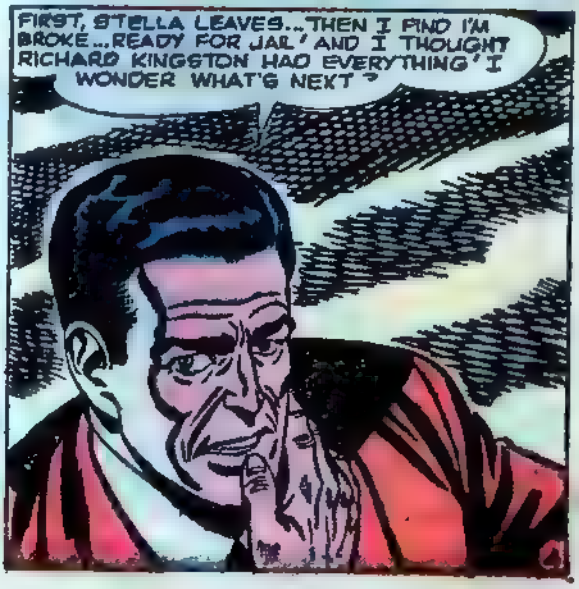
WITH ALL MY MONEY, I CAN GET ANOTHER WIFE TWICE AS BEAUTIFUL AS YOU!

IT'S NO USE, MR KINGSTON! I'VE TRIED EVERYWHERE! WE CAN'T GET IT!
WHAT'S NO USE! WHAT CAN'T WE GET?


MONEY! THE BANK WON'T LOAN US A CENT! YOUR FIRM IS BANKRUPT!
BANKRUPT!

YOU'RE LYING! YOU'RE MY ACCOUNTANT, SMYTH! YOU KNOW I'M WORTH MILLIONS!
NO! YOU'RE IN DEBT UP TO YOUR EARS! YOU'RE STONE-BROKE!

BROKE! I CAN'T BELIEVE IT!
THAT'S NOT ALL, BIG SHOT! IF YOU DON'T DIG UP SOME MONEY FAST.. AND PLENTY OF IT, YOU'RE GOING TO JAIL FOR FRAUD! AND I QUIT!


FIRST, STELLA LEAVES...THEN I FIND I'M BROKE...READY FOR JAIL! AND I THOUGHT RICHARD KINGSTON HAD EVERYTHING! I WONDER WHAT'S NEXT?

MR RICHARD KINGSTON BROODED FOR ONE HOUR, AND THEN HE HAD HIS THIRD VISITOR OF THE DAY...
HELLO, MR. KINGSTON'
GET OUT! I'M NOT SEEING ANYONE TODAY!
YOU'LL SEE ME, MR. KINGSTON!
WHO ARE YOU? WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
YOU MIGHT CALL ME- MR DEATH'
DEATH? SEE HERE, WHOEVER YOU ARE, GET OUT! I'VE GOT ENOUGH TROUBLE NOW!
THAT'S WHAT YOU HIRED ME FOR, MR KINGSTON..
WAIT!
TO END ALL YOUR TROUBLES'
DON'T! ARRGH!
BLAM!
BAM!
5
WHEN THEY FOUND RICHARD KINGSTON'S BODY AN HOUR LATER, EVERYONE FELT VERY SORRY FOR HIM EVEN THE UGLY LITTLE JANITOR, ABNER MARSH...
TSK, TSK' POOR BOY'
THE END

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HIS WIFE THROWS THINGS

ORMAN HASN'T DONE A BIT OF WORK ALL DAY!

HOW CAN HE.., POOR FELLOW? THE WAY THAT MENACE OF A WIFE KEEPS AFTER HIM, IT'S A MIRACLE HE HAS ENOUGH STRENGTH TO REPORT TO THE OFFICE IN THE MORNING!

ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST MYSTIC TALES!

5 78

ORMAN'S COLLEAGUES WATCH PITYINGLY AS HE RISES FROM HIS DESK AND TRUDGES TO THE SUPERVISOR'S OFFICE...

I CAN'T STAND IT ANY MORE!

SUPERVISOR

PLEASE, SIR, LET ME GO HOME! I CAN'T CONCENTRATE! I KEEP MAKING WRONG ENTRIES!

SURE, ORMAN, SURE...TAKE AS MUCH TIME OFF AS YOU NEED! STAY OUT AS LONG AS IT TAKES YOU TO CLEAR UP YOUR ..ER... PERSONAL AFFAIRS!

LOOK...ORMAN'S LEAVING! WHAT'S THE MATTER... IS HE SICK?
HAVEN'T YOU HEARD? HIS WIFE HAS THE NASTIEST TEMPER! SHE KEEPS THROWING THINGS AT HIM!
EVERYBODY KNOWS...THEY KEEP LOOKING AT ME WITH PITY IN THEIR EYES... BUT I COULD STAND THE PITY AND ALL THE SLY JOKES...IF ONLY WHAT SHE DOES WERE NOT SO HORRIBLY DANGEROUS!
I'LL BE HOME IN A HALF-HOUR... I'LL HAVE IT OUT WITH HER! SHE MUST LEARN TO CONTROL HER TEMPER!
ORMAN IS HOME NOW! HIS HAND TREMBLINGLY SLIDES THE FRONT DOOR OPEN!
I'LL BE AS TACTFUL AS POSSIBLE...
WHO'S THAT... WHO JUST CAME IN?
SHE'S IN THE KITCHEN! THAT'S BAD...THERE ARE SO MANY THINGS TO THROW IN THE KITCHEN!
IT'S ME, DEAR...ORMAN! C...COULD YOU COME OUT HERE, PLEASE! I WANT TO TALK TO YOU!
IF YOU WANT TO TALK TO ME, NUMSKULL, YOU'LL COME IN HERE WHERE I AM!
I HAVE NO CHOICE...
YES, DEAR!
WELL, WHAT IS IT? DON'T STAND THERE JUST STARING AT ME!
DEAR, YOU KNOW I LOVE YOU...YOU KNOW I'VE BEEN A GOOD PROVIDER ALL THESE YEARS...I'VE NEVER DENIED YOU ANYTHING, HAVE I?

YES, YES...COME ON, SPIT IT OUT! WHAT'RE YOU DRIVING AT, NINCOMPOOP?
Y-YOUR TEMPER! TH-THE HABIT YOU HAVE OF THROWING THINGS! I...I JUST WANTED TO SAY IT'S HORRIBLY DANGEROUS!
SO NOW I'M HORRIBLY DANGEROUS, AM I? YOU'VE SAID ENOUGH! I'M NOT LISTENING TO ANOTHER WORD! MARRIED TO A MAN FOR 13 YEARS AND THE ONLY PHRASE OF ENDEARMENT HE CAN THINK OF IS "HORRIBLY DANGEROUS"!
NOW YOU'VE MADE ME LOSE MY TEMPER AGAIN!
AND WHEN I LOSE MY TEMPER... I THROW THINGS!
DON'T! DON'T! PLEASE LET ME EXPLAIN!
BUT ORMON'S FRENZIED PLEA GOES UNHEEDED, AS THE SAUCERS WHIZ FROM HIS WIFE'S HAND, ONE AFTER THE OTHER!
ORMAN KEEPS DUCKING... AND THE SAUCERS THAT MISS HIM, ZOOM OUT THROUGH THE OPEN WINDOW!
STOP! PLEASE STOP! WHY DON'T YOU LET ME TELL YOU WHY YOUR THROWING HABIT IS SO DANGEROUS? I'VE JUST READ THAT THERE'S LIFE ON THAT TINY PLANET UP IN THE SKY!
AND SOMEDAY ONE OF THOSE SAUCERS YOU THROW AT ME WILL HIT THAT TINY PLANET.. AND THEN A LOT OF INNOCENT CREATURES THERE WILL GET HURT!
THE END

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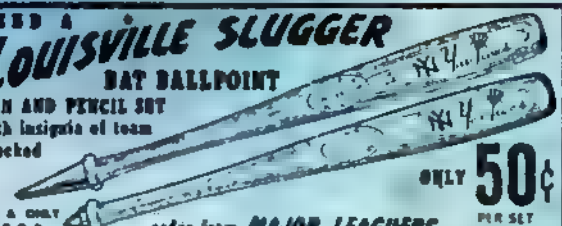

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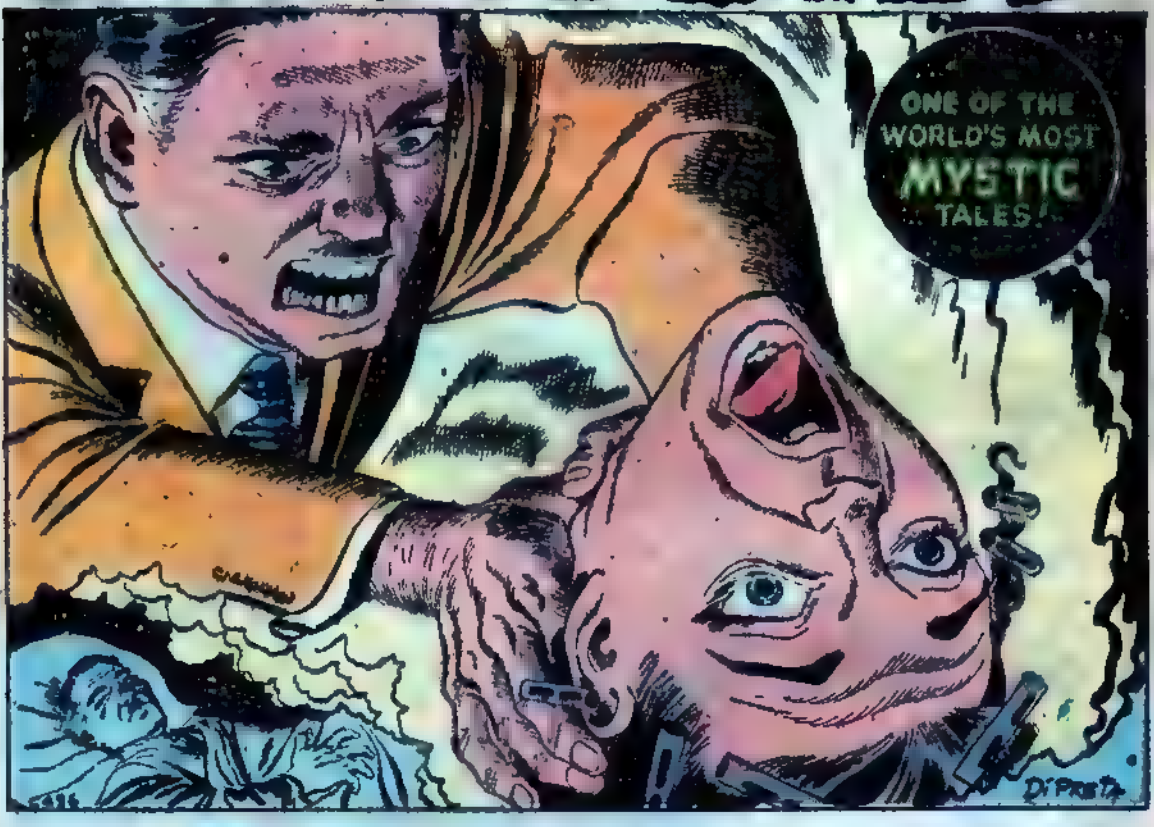
SO NOW YOU KNOW WHERE THE FLYING SAUCERS COME FROM, EH? NOW FOR OUR WINDUP, WE WANT YOU TO MEET HERBERT, ANOTHER CREEP WITH WIFE-TROUBLE... HERBERT IS A DREAMER... TOO BAD SOME DREAMS HAVE A WAY OF COMING TRUE!

HOW MANY TIMES CAN YOU DIE?



EVERY NIGHT YOU HAVE THOSE NIGHTMARES! ALL THAT MOANING AND TOSSING, THEY MUST BE PRETTY HORRIBLE!
OH, NO, MY DEAR! THEY'RE VERY NICE DREAMS... VERY NICE INDEED!

SO HERBERT WENT BACK TO SLEEP AGAIN LIKE A GOOD HUSBAND! LIKE MANY OF US, HE DREAMED, AND LIKE MANY OF US, HIS DREAMS EXPRESSED HIS WISHES! BUT, UNLIKE MANY OF US, HIS WISHES WERE OF... MURDER...
I'M GOING TO KILL YOU, MY DEAR!
NO! NO! OH, HERBERT! NOOOO!
YES! YES! YESSSS!
ARAGHHH!
I'M FREE OF HER AT LAST! FREE! FREE! FREE!
I ARREST YOU, HERBERT SPEARS, FOR THE MURDER OF YOUR WIFE!
BECAUSE YOU CHOKED YOUR WIFE TO DEATH, I SENTENCE YOU TO DEATH IN THE SAME MANNER... BY HANGING!
NO! NO! ARAAGH!
HERBERT! WAKE UP! WAKE UP!
FOR GOODNESS SAKE, HERBERT... YOU'LL HAVE TO DO SOMETHING ABOUT WHATEVER YOU'RE DREAMING ABOUT! THIS CAN'T GO ON!
NO... IT... CAN'T... GO... ON! I'LL DO... SOMETHING ABOUT IT... DON'T WORRY...

LIKE EVERY GOOD HUSBAND, HERBERT HAD A NICE JOB AND WENT TO WORK EVERY MORNING...
GOOD MORNING, FOLKS!
HI, HERB!
'MORNING, MISTER SPEARS!
BUT, UNLIKE MOST GOOD HUSBANDS, HE HAD A GIRL FRIEND...
GOOD MORNING, ELSA...
DON'T GOOD MORNING ME, YOU WEASEL! DID YOU DO IT YET? DID YOU GET RID OF THE BAG?
I...I COULDN'T...THOSE DREAMS...I HAD ONE AGAIN LAST NIGHT!
DREAMS, YET? WHAT D'YA DO.. LIVE BY 'EM? YA SAY YA LOVE ME...AND WHEN IT COMES TO GETTING RID OF YOUR OLD LADY, YA TALK ABOUT DREAMS!
BUT, BABY... IF YOU ONLY KNEW! REMEMBER, I PLANNED TO CHOKE HER, FIXING IT SO IT LOOKED LIKE A ROBBER DID IT? WELL, I ALSO DREAMT I WAS HANGED FOR IT!
OH, FOR PETE'S SAKE! THEN POISON HER, - YOU HEAR ME? OTHERWISE IT'S ALL OVER BETWEEN US!
OH, NO, ELSA! DON'T SAY THAT! I COULDN'T STAND IT!
WELL, YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO ABOUT IT... SO DO IT!
SO...HERBERT BOUGHT SOME POISON IN AN OUT-OF-THE-WAY STORE...
I NEED IT TO GET RID OF PESTS...
THIS'LL DO IT, SIR!
AND, AT SUPPER THAT NIGHT...
ER..., AREN'T WE HAVING COFFEE, ANGEL?
I FORGOT TO BUY SOME! WHY DON'T YOU LIE DOWN FOR A WHILE AND I'LL RUN DOWN TO THE STORE FOR IT? YOU LOOK A BIT TIRED...

ARGHH! HERBERT, THIS COFFEE... IT TASTES .. LIKE...
...LIKE POISON, ANGEL? IT SHOULD! IT IS POISON!
I DID IT! I DID IT! NOW I'M FREE!
I ARREST YOU FOR THE MURDER OF YOUR WIFE!
I MUST INFORM YOU THAT THIS STATE HAS RECENTLY PASSED A NEW FORM OF CAPITAL PUNISHMENT... EXECUTION BY POISONING! THAT'S THE SENTENCE I PASS ON YOU!
NO! NOOOO...
HERBERT! WAKE UP, DEAR! HAVING ANOTHER NIGHT-MARE?
HUM? OH.. YES... I GUESS I WAS...
COFFEE'S READY, DEAR!
ALRIGHT... I'LL BE RIGHT THERE, ANGEL..

AS YOU CAN SEE, HERBERT HAD HIS TROUBLES! THAT NIGHT, AFTER PLANNING TO KILL HIS WIFE BY A FAULTY ELECTRIC WIRE...HE DREAMT HE DID JUST THAT...

AAEEEE!

BUT... HE ALSO DREAMT THAT HE WAS ELECTROCUTED!

THIS IS TERRIBLE! TERRIBLE! NO MATTER HOW I PLAN TO KILL HER, I DREAM I AM EXECUTED IN THE SAME MANNER! I'VE GOT TO FIND A WAY TO KILL HER THAT ISN'T USED IN CAPITAL PUNISHMENT! AH! I'VE GOT IT! BY DROWNING! THAT'S IT! THERE'S NO WAY THEY CAN EXECUTE ME THAT WAY!

ALL EXCITED OVER HIS NEW PLAN, HERBERT COULDN'T SLEEP ANY MORE THAT NIGHT! THE NEXT MORNING, HE SAID...

ANGEL, LET'S GO FOR A ROWBOAT RIDE ON THE LAKE! IT'S A BEAUTIFUL DAY FOR IT!

ALRIGHT, IF YOU WANT, HERBERT...

THIS WAS EASY! ONCE OUT IN THE BOAT, ALL HE HAD TO SAY WAS...

STAND UP, ANGEL! I WANT TO TAKE A PICTURE OF YOU STANDING UP!

OH, NO, HERBERT! I'M AFRAID THE BOAT'LL TIP OVER! YOU STAND UP AND SHOW ME IF IT'S SAFE!

SURE... SEE? ANGEL! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

SPUT! ARGH! I CAN'T SWIM! I'M DROWNING! SAVE ME! SAVE ME!

NO...I WON'T!

YOU FORGET THAT YOU TALK IN YOUR SLEEP, DEAR!

THE END

DON'T FORGET TO LOOK ME ON US WHEN THE NEXT ISSUE OF MYSTIC APPEARS ON YOUR FAVORITE NEWSSTAND! YOU WON'T WANT TO MISS "A FELLA NEEDS A ZOMBIE" AND "THE REVOLT OF THE ROBOTS"! BE SEEIN' YOU!

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